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CORRUPTION, POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME IN THE COUNTRY OF GUINEA-BISSAU

Brian K. Harte

INTRODUCTION

Within a global context, West Africa is regarded as one of the poorest and least developed regions in the world today (United Nations, 2014). The region of West Africa, often referred to as Western Africa or West of Africa, is comprised of 17 countries including: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Guinea-Bissau, is a region of West Africa that lies along the Gulf of Guinea and stretches north to Sahel. The addition of Guinea-Bissau's capital 'Bissau' to its name distinguishes this country from the neighboring country of Guinea (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018).

Internationally, Guinea-Bissau is regarded as a 'cocaine gateway' and transition point for narcotics trafficking from South America to West Africa, and into Europe (United Nations, 2011). Furthermore, "many esteemed experts have asserted that West Africa, and Guinea-Bissau in particular, is crumbling under the pressures posed by this drug trade which threatens to turn the region into an epicenter of lawlessness and instability" (Bybee, 2011, p. 3).

In 2013, Guinea-Bissau was awarded the dubious distinction of becoming Africa's first NARCO state (United States Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2014). As a NARCO state, or a state with an economy that is dependent on the illegal drug trade, the country has a reputation of being a 'drug smugglers paradise' (2014). Moreover,

"Guinea-Bissau has what can be termed as a permissive environment, which allows criminals to operate relatively uninhibited by any legal, financial, or other constraints" (Bybee, 2011, p. 18). Additionally, "West Africa has everything criminals need: resources, a strategic location, weak governance, and an endless source of foot soldiers who see few viable alternatives to a life of crime" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2009a, p. 2). Thus, failed states may be particularly problematic, in that, "the state's capacity to control its territory and govern its people, including its institutions that promote accountability within government" (Ojo, 2016, p. 280) may also fail to enforce the rule of law against potential criminals, including drug traffickers.

In 2015, "Guinea-Bissau was ranked the fourth most vulnerable country for money laundering in the entire world" (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau [UNIOGBIS], 2018, p.1). Furthermore, Guinea-Bissau suffers from human trafficking activities and is regarded as a source country for the commission of child forced labor and child sex trafficking (United States Department of State, 2015).

"Organized crime is plundering West Africa - destroying governments, the environment, human rights and health" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2009a, p.2). "Over the past 50 years, Africa is estimated to have lost in excess of \$1 trillion in illicit financial flows (IFF) - this sum is roughly equivalent to all the official development assistance received by Africa during the same timeframe" (Ojo, 2016, p. 5).

Since 2010, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been assisting the government of Guinea-Bissau to help eradicate the drug trade through the creation of the Transnational Crime Unit (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018).

This paper provides an overview of transnational crime, corruption and political instability that contribute to social unrest within the country of Guinea-Bissau.

DAILY LIFE IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Many scholars agree that corruption is the fundamental cause of underdevelopment within the continent of Africa (i.e., Edigba & Maiangwa, 2012; Philip & Moses, 2013; Afoweso & Odeyemi, 2014; Agbibo, 2010, Winter; Desta, 2007; Lawal, 2007).

In Guinea-Bissau, approximately 60 percent of the country's population is under 25 years of age (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Moreover, 69 percent of its 1.8 billion population live below the poverty line, earning less than roughly \$993.00 USD per year (World Food Programme, 2018). This equates to nearly two out of three people living in absolute poverty. Additionally, 25 percent of people living in the country suffer from malnutrition from not eating meals regularly (World Food Programme, 2018). Since 85 percent of people work within the cash crop (cashew) industry (World Food Programme, 2018), the local economy of the country is heavily reliant on both agricultural crops and foreign aid and assistance.

GUINEA-BISSAU'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT RANKING



Photo credit: <https://www.maxpixel.net/Live-Village-Human-Ghana-Africa-Hut-Traditionally-1937533>

“The Human Development Index (HDI) serves as a composite static (index) that measures key dimensions of development including:

- A long healthy life
- being knowledgeable
- having a decent standard of living”
(Our World in Data, 2018, p. 1)

Established through a methodology developed by The United Nations Development Programme, the HDI represents a global measure of metrics that assess conditions such as life expectancy, literacy, educational enrollment and gross domestic product (Our World in Data, 2018).

The United Nations Development Program (2016) reports that in 2015, Guinea-Bissau ranked very low in conditions promoting human development (ranking 178th out of possible 188 countries and territories). That is, in conditions contributing to: access to knowledge, quality of life, and overall standard of living, Guinea-Bissau ranked in the bottom 10 percent of all countries and territories in the world today. “The impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the legacy and effects of slave trade, colonialism, the Cold War, and the workings of the international economic system for centuries” (Ojo, 2016, p.3).

SOCIAL-POLITICAL CLIMATE IN GUINEA-BISSAU

The social-political climate within Guinea-Bissau could be described as tumultuous. In 2017, protestors took to the streets to demand the resignation of the country's key leader. These protests stem from a 2015 power struggle within the ruling party in the country - the



Photo credit: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/guinea-bissau-flag-map-geography-1758954/>

Party of the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). For the past two years, Guinea-Bissau's government has been embroiled in bitter turmoil due to a lack of solidarity between the country's heads of government. The dissension within President Jose Mario Vaz's own ruling party, the PAIGC, has resulted in government instability and uncertainty. Moreover, President Vaz's termination of the country's Prime Minister Domingos Simoes Pereira, the leader of the PAIGC, has also fueled tensions within the party.

In 2016, a political impasse between government leadership resulted in intervention from the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC). This intervention stemmed from concerns that the mounting political crisis within the country must end, thus, "urging national actors to abide by the constitution and the rule of law and to engage in dialogue to find a solution" (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2018, p. 1).

THE CONAKRY AGREEMENT

A breakdown in government leadership created a political impasse in Guinea-Bissau. Specifically, government instability led to an inability to resolve differences and hindered the ability of top-level government officials to conduct its affairs. Thus, the need for a peaceful resolution to end the political crisis was evident. As a result, talks between the United Nations, political leaders, civil leaders and religious leaders within the country ensued. The agreement reached from these talks is known as the Conakry Agreement. The Conakry Agreement, signed October 14, 2016, established a ten-point plan for government reform, including the following tenets:

- consensus on choice of Prime Minister
- formation of an inclusive government agreed upon by all political parties in the National People's Assembly
- a consideration to appoint independent prominent figures and civil leaders to government
- an inclusive government that will implement a national roundtable dialogue within 30 days following the appointment of the Prime Minister
- compliance with existing appointment principles of senior officials
- assembly and adoption of a stability pact signed by key political and social stakeholders
- agreement to allow monitoring, development and implementation support of the Stability Pact from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union, Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the United Nations and the European Union
- establishment of a three-level monitoring and evaluation framework to oversee the underpinnings of the Conakry Agreement
- constitutional form
- the unconditional reintegration of the 15 radical members of parliament within the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde – PAIGC (Conakry Agreement, 2016, pp. 1-2)

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2343

In 2017, The UNSC issued Resolution 2343. This resolution “stressed the need for the Government of Guinea-Bissau to continue to take concrete steps towards peace, security and stability in the country, by “effectively reforming the security sector, tackling corruption through the reinforcement of the judicial system, improving public administration and State revenue management, as well as the supply of basic services to the population” (United Nations Security Council, 2017, p. 1). With a focus on national reconciliation, this document underscores the importance of collaboration and a commitment to “upholding the principles of separation of powers, rule of law, justice and combating impunity, and encouraging all stakeholders to engage in the process” (United Nations Security Council, 2018, p. 2). Moreover, this document emphasizes the importance of recognizing the responsibility of the country’s government to address the growing drug trafficking problem within the country, as well as other related transnational crime activities. Furthermore, the document stresses the importance of significant government action toward improving the country’s security posture with regards to both its national security and justice reforms.

CONTINUED CIVIL UNREST WITHIN THE COUNTRY

Demonstrators Seek to Remove President Vaz

In March 2017, protesters marched on Guinea-Bissau’s capital to demand the removal of President Jose Mario Vaz (Dabo, 2017). Later that month, thousands of protestors had assembled and lined the streets shouting ‘Jomav out’, a reference to an abbreviation of the President’s name (Dabo, 2017). In November of the same year, “10 demonstrators were wounded in clashes with local police when police reportedly fired tear gas at protesters and forcefully extricated some protestors from National Heroes Square near the Presidential Place, while protestors threw rocks at

the police” (Garda World, 2017, p. 1).

DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUE

In July 2018, hundreds of civil servants aligned the streets of Guinea-Bissau to demand a higher minimum wage and improved living conditions (Oteng, 2018). The National Union of Guinea-Bissau Workers (UNTG) is advocating for a monthly wage increase from \$13.87 to \$105.12 (NGO Pulse, 2018). The UNTG comprises 8000 West African civil servants (NGO Pulse, 2018).

In October 2018, thousands of people marched against Guinea-Bissau’s electoral Census process (Oteng, 2018). Although laws have been enacted to govern the accurate accounting of all Guinea-Bissau residents, the census process has not been completed. Thus, many citizens were not registered to vote in the November 2018 elections. To correct these discrepancies, the Guinea-Bissau government suspended the election process to afford an opportunity for more voters to be registered.

CONFLICTS WITHIN GOVERNMENT

Menkhaus’s (2007) concept of “governance without government”, as seen in the example of Somalia, is similar to the current state of government within Guinea-Bissau. That is, the

lack of an effective government provides local and international terrorists wide safe haven beyond the reach of law enforcement. To the extent that economic development requires an effective government to provide a dependable legal and security environment for the private sector, obtain international development loans, provide essential public goods, and catalyze economic growth, the absence of a reasonable Somali government directly contributes to the country’s enduring underdevelopment, which in turn produces social environments conducive to crime, violence, and radicalism. (Menkhaus, 2007, p. 93)

While the country of Guinea-Bissau does in fact have established government leadership, its inability to provide adequate security and

thus, protect its nation, raises many questions regarding the impacts of corruption within this country. Thus, an increase in narco-corruption may prove to contribute to the erosion of democratic institutions that make it more difficult for impacted countries to defend their borders, population, and sovereignty. Moreover, the combination of poverty, corruption, and failed governance may prove to contribute to power struggles of groups within Guinea-Bissau and overall government and economic uncertainty.

EFFORTS TO FIGHT DRUG TRAFFICKING IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Through the creation of the Transnational Crime Unit within Guinea-Bissau, Judicial Police aim to ramp up investigations into organized crime elements and drug trafficking rings (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018).

More recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime efforts have included the establishment of a new Judicial Police branch in two new locations within the country, and other efforts to strengthen the justice system, and its rules of law structures (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011).

The ongoing issue of transnational trafficking in West Africa is stimulated within Guinea-Bissau based on a variety of conditions within the country, including: 1.) weakened economic and social institutions; 2.) corruption within government and military; 3.) easily penetrable borders, and 4.) a lack of significant control structures. Due to its vulnerability to organized crime, Guinea-Bissau may be seen as a significant nexus for not only the illicit drug trade, but also for other trafficking outlets. Since 2010, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been assisting the government of Guinea-Bissau to help eradicate illegal trafficking through the creation of the Transnational Crime Unit (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018).

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's arrest of Guinea-Bissau's former Navy Chief, Rear Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto in a 2013 cocaine-for-arms sting provided some insights into the gravity of the drug trafficking problem within the country (Pierson & Raymond, 2016).

In 2014, Rear Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, pled guilty to charges of conspiring to import narcotics in to the United States in a Manhattan courtroom (Pierson & Raymond, 2016). Na Tchuto was designated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as a drug kingpin based on long-held beliefs that he was involved in the illegal drug trade (Pierson & Raymond, 2016). Na Tchuto and Ibraima Papa Camara, Air Force Chief of Staff, were designated by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as drug kingpins in 2010 based their alleged involvement in international drug trafficking (United States Department of the Treasury, 2010).

EFFORTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Regarded as a modern-day form of slavery, human trafficking continues to be a nefarious organized criminal activity that plagues the international community. The United States Department of State (2016) identifies the country of Guinea-Bissau as a "source country for children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking" (p. 1). Thus, the dismantling of the criminal enterprise of human trafficking remains a top priority for the law enforcement community around the world.

Human trafficking victims, men, women and children, may be forced to work in domestic servitude or within the commercial sex trade.

Figure 1 below illustrates estimated victims by global region and the estimated illicit revenues garnered from human trafficking through forced labor.

Figure 1: Human Trafficking – Estimated Annual Profits Per Victim - Forced Servitude: A Global Comparison



Source: University of Southern California, 2018

Figure 1 provides a comparison of continents where known human trafficking activities exist and illustrates the global impact of human trafficking - forced labor across effected continents. Regionally, Africa annually produces an estimated \$13.1 billion of criminal profits for every 3,900 victims. Africa represents the continent with the fourth largest human trafficking criminal enterprise world-wide (n=\$13.1 billion), with Central and South-east Europe and the commonwealth of Independent States representing the third largest human trafficking enterprise (n=\$18 billion). The United States, Canada and the European Union, represents the second largest human trafficking criminal enterprise in the world (n=\$46.9 billion). The Asia-Pacific region is most pervasive for criminal activity for the trafficking of persons – forced labor (n=\$51.8 billion). Latin America and the Middle East represent \$12 billion dollars and \$8.5 billion in criminal revenues, respectively.

Figure 2 expands on the issue of human trafficking by indicating the projected number of victims globally.

Figure 2: Human Trafficking by Type – Global Comparisons



Source: International Labor Organization, 2012

The International Labor Organization (2012) reports that an estimated 68 percent (n=14.2 million) of victims are believed to be forced into providing domestic labor. Additionally, 22 percent of these estimated victims are forced into the commercial sex industry (n=4.5 million). Another 10 percent of victims are believed to be used as forced labor imposed by a state (n=2.2 million). Based on these total projections, the estimated number of human trafficking victims as of 2012 was 20.9 million persons.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM

Economic freedom is a term used within a global context to describe the freedom that people within a specified country experience based on a variety of economic considerations. The term itself is complex and includes multiplistic economic dimensions of freedom including, but not limited to: 1.) Labor (Labour); 2.) Corruption; 3.) Property; 4.) Financial; 5.) Investment; 6.) Monetary; 7.) Government spending; 8.) Fiscal; 9.) Trade; 10.) Business (Heritage Foundation, 2018).

The Heritage Foundation (2018) annually publishes an Index of Economic Freedom to raise awareness of the economic condition of countries across the globe. Additionally, they provide a scale to delineate the continuum of possible scores, ranging from free through repressed. The following color coding is provided to illustrate the reporting of scores on a scale of 0-100. The reporting of scores below equate to the color of the respective freedom score: 1.) free (green),

2.) mostly free (light green), 3.) moderately free (yellow), 4.) mostly unfree (orange), and 5.) repressed (red), are numerically designated as follows:

Figure 3: Index of Freedom Indicators



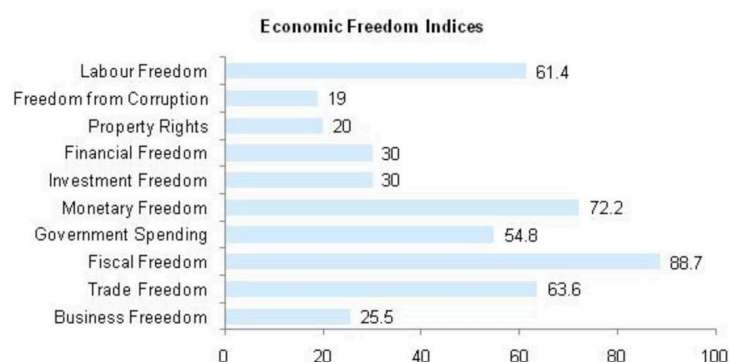
Source: Adopted from The Heritage Foundation (2018). Index of economic freedom. Retrieved from: https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2018/book/index_2018.pdf

Table 1 below describes extreme highs and lows of economic freedom scores across a variety of dimensions including its: 1.) Rule of Law, 2.) Government size, 3.) Regulatory efficiency, 4.) Government openness (Heritage Foundation, 2018). The following indices were selected based on their suitability for framing common problems impacting freedom within the country of Guinea-Bissau. The results of all findings are described below following Table 1.

A reading of Guinea-Bissau's economic freedom indicators identified in Table 1 above revealed the following:

- Freedom from corruption, property rights, financial freedom, investment freedom and business freedom ranked among the lowest among freedom scores reported for the country.
- Fiscal freedom, monetary freedom and trade freedom ranked among the highest reported for the country (88.7, 72.2, and 63.6 respectively).
- Freedom from corruption ranked extremely low with a score of 19 out of a possible 100 points.
- Property rights ranked extremely low with a score of 20 out of a possible 100 points.
- Financial freedom and investment freedom both ranked very low, with a score of 30 out of a possible 100 points.
- Business freedom scored extremely low, with a score of 25.5 out of a possible 100 points.

Table 1: Economic Freedom Indicators – Guinea-Bissau



Source: Euromoney Country Risk (2018). Guinea-bissau. Retrieved from: <https://www.euromoneycountryrisk.com/Wiki/Guinea-Bissau>

An analysis utilizing an Economic Freedom Score risk continuum ranging from: green (free), light green (mostly free), yellow (moderately free), orange (mostly unfree) and red (unfree) revealed the following:

- Of the ten indicators described in Table 1, the country ranked ‘repressed’ in the freedoms of freedom from corruption, property rights, financial freedom, investment freedom and business freedom.
- Guinea-Bissau ranked ‘mostly unfree’ (orange) in the area of government spending.
- The country ranked ‘mostly unfree’ for the indicators of labour (labor) freedom and trade freedom.

To further explore how economic condition impacts quality of life, new questions must be developed to provide a mechanism for discovery of how specific freedoms are constricted within Guinea-Bissau and the consequences of repressed freedoms.

CONCLUSION

This brief study aims to garner attention to persistent problems that have led to Guinea-Bissau being one of the poorest nations in the world today. It also provides a broad assessment of daily routine in Guinea-Bissau for the majority of its inhabitants. Moreover, the economic condition, government structure, military involvement and impacts of corruption and crime are also explored. This research assists in providing an overview of conditions plaguing the country of Guinea-Bissau to stimulate further discussion regarding the need for drastic large-scale changes within the country. While further research is needed to explore how sustained growth can contribute to the country’s well-being and prosperity, this paper provides a view into persistent problems that continue to contribute to the instability of the country itself.

While this brief study describes challenges of and for the people of Guinea-Bissau and circumstances that hinder their overall prosperity and success, it does not delineate all dimensions of the problem

necessary to improve its overall social condition. While these considerations were not the overall focus of this research, they are important questions to ask from a social, political, and financial standpoint.

Therefore, further research should focus on the country’s ability to function as an incubator for growth of businesses, while improving export capabilities, trade opportunities, and further provide for economic growth. To this end, additional questions to be asked, could include a review of the country’s financial, investment and business freedoms. This speaks to the country’s economic viability and extends beyond the scope of this initial research. Future studies should also consider how government spending and trade freedom impact the overall functionality of the country in meeting its citizens’ needs.

As one of the poorest countries in the world today, a sustained effort is needed to eradicate crime, provide stability, and promote development within this nation, and address the burgeoning problem of corruption, injustice, inequity and instability in the country of Guinea-Bissau. As a global community, we should serve as both advocates and partners for this nation through not tolerating unjust practices and the weakened social institutions that have limited the growth and economic prosperity of this country.

The United Nations Security Council and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) are readily monitoring the situation in Guinea-Bissau and have recently issued a resolution to spur action within the country. Resolution 2404, defines the mandate of UNIOGBIS, the key political activities of the mission are to: “(a) Support the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Roadmap, and facilitate an inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation process, the strengthening of democratic governance, particularly with regards to the implementation of necessary urgent reforms; (b) Support, through good offices the

electoral process to ensure inclusive, free and credible legislative elections in 2018 within the legally mandated time frame; (c) Provide support, including by technical assistance, to national authorities in expediting and completing the review of Guinea-Bissau's Constitution" (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau [UNIOGBIS], 2018, p.1). Additionally, in 2018, the ECOWS imposed individual sanction against key government officials in Guinea-Bissau for impeding the peace process and failing to end the political crisis within the country (Economic Community of West African States, 2018). Thus, the situation in Guinea-Bissau remains fragile.

Transnational crime, corruption and political instability appear to tear at the social fabric of Guinea-Bissau. Thus, the need for a sustainable political climate and a stable economy cannot be understated. The country serves as a trans-shipment point for drug distribution through Europe. Moreover, Guinea-Bissau is regarded as a point of origin country for child human trafficking.

The questions addressed in this study ought to help to build better prospects for Guinea-Bissau. First, how can a country with very weak financial freedom prosper amidst a backdrop of weakened government structures and large-scale corruption? Second, what actions can be taken to limit opportunities for corruption and strengthen the government's infrastructure? Third, with a strong reliance on large amounts of foreign aid and repressed investment freedom, how can the living conditions of citizens of Guinea-Bissau be improved? Moreover, a focus on continuous positive growth and improvement is necessary for any changes implemented to be impactful.

Although, various initiatives have been started to help rebuild the country's infrastructure, significantly more resources and greater transparency are needed. Moreover, a wider framework for security reform is needed to

tackle the issues of human trafficking and drug trafficking that exists throughout the region. In order for the government to be successful, its goals and objectives must be centric to the economic condition of the country. Through international cooperation and oversight, the economic condition, political stability, and enforcement of law may significantly improve. However, with a high dependency on foreign aid, decreasing foreign investment flows and an anticipated drop in total cashew exports, the economic state of the country remains highly uncertain.

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